UNITED NATIONS

A E

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/52/57
E/1997/4
6 January 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-second session

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
Substantive session of 1997
Geneva, 30 June-25 July 1997

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

International Year of the Family

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 2	3
II.	SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS	3 - 11	3
III.	COMMON CORE THEMES WITHIN THE FAMILY-SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCES OF THE 1990s	12 - 47	5
	A. Human rights	13 - 19	6
	B. Strengthening families	20 - 26	7
	C. Situation and needs of the child	27 - 33	9
	D. Advancement of women	34 - 40	10
	E. Poverty eradication	41 - 47	12

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CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
IV.	FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY	48 - 90	13
	A. National level	48 - 69	13
	B. Regional level	70 - 73	16
	C. International level	74 - 90	16
V.	SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY	91 - 101	19

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 50/142 of 21 December 1995, requested the Secretary-General to report to at its fifty-second session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the progress made on the follow-up to the International Year of the Family, taking into account the promotion of integrated reporting. It also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a comprehensive document containing the family-related provisions from the outcome of the World Summit for Children, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to be submitted to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-fifth session.

2. The present report provides an analysis of the family-related provisions from the outcome of the above-cited conferences, describes follow-up activities to the International Year of the Family at all levels and contains specific proposals for follow-up action by the Secretariat.

II. SUMMARY AND SUGGESTIONS

3. The international community, in its search for a new integrated approach to development, organized a number of international conferences in the 1990s. These included the World Summit for Children, which adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration;[1] the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which adopted Agenda 21;[2] the World Conference on Human Rights, which adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action;[3] the International Conference on Population and Development, which adopted the Programme of Action on Population and Development;[4] the World Summit for Social Development, which adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action;[5] the Fourth World Conference on Women, which adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;[6] and Habitat II, which adopted the Istanbul Declaration and Habitat Agenda.[7] Each agenda, plan or programme of action contained recommendations and provisions related to family issues which were seen as integral components of development.

4. The conferences reflect the growing consensus in the global community on the integrated, holistic nature of economic and social progress and development. While each conference has a distinct focus, all are part of a shared perception of development which entails recognition of the importance of sustainable development, a special focus on the human person as the agent and beneficiary of development, and an emphasis on empowerment, participation and inclusiveness. Moreover, the new approach to development, which places people at the centre, also introduces the notion of 'cross-cutting issues' in development.

5. In discussing family issues, the conferences start from the premise that the family is the basic unit of society and the vortex of concerns for

sustainable development. The conferences reinforce the interrelationship between family well-being and sustainable development, particularly by encouraging actions directed to integrating a family-sensitive approach to development strategies and recognizing that the family is entitled to the widest possible protection and support.

6. Agreed human rights instruments are seen as important guides to improve family legislation, develop or reinforce family policy or establish institutions or administrative practices to support families. The conferences also reveal that the concept of human rights is relevant to the family at several levels: (a) the individual's right to have a family (e.g., reproductive rights); (b) the individual's rights within the family (e.g., rights of children and women); and (c) the family's rights with reference to its environment (e.g., vis-à-vis the State).

7. The core theme, strengthening families, is common to all conferences. All address the challenge that family needs are met, that the institution of the family is strengthened, and that the stability of the family is promoted through the empowerment of families. Multifaceted and intersectoral efforts to support families and provide programmes to protect them are suggested. All conferences stress the need for intra-familial as well as public family support systems. The conferences make specific references to family-sensitive policies and family support systems, such as flexible working hours, part-time employment, work-sharing, public or publicly subsidized child care, parental leave, social security, disability benefits and assistance to families to care for dependants, and family welfare.

8. Particular attention to the protection of children is underlined. The Rio, Cairo and Copenhagen conferences reaffirmed the agenda for children. The Vienna Conference urged universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by 1995. All conferences stressed that every child has the right to be nurtured and protected by its family and that families and society must work together to improve the situation and protect the rights of all children, particularly those in especially difficult circumstances, for example children in areas of armed conflict, children who lack adequate family support, urban street children, abandoned children, children with disabilities, children addicted to narcotic drugs, and the girl child. All children must have access to food, shelter, education and health care.

9. The empowerment of women is another common core theme. The conferences point out that women and men must have equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, and must share equally responsibilities within the family. The concept of gender equality, stressed by the conferences, was essential if families were to be at the centre of social development. The conferences noted that among the most demanding daily aspects of life for many families, especially single-parent and female-headed families, is finding a balance between work and familial responsibilities. They call for a true partnership between men and women in family life and recommend actions such as enacting and enforcing legal and policy measures to forbid discriminatory practices against women and the girl child, ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, eliminating gender-based discrimination before the law (notably with

respect to legal provisions for inheritance, marriage, child custody and property ownership), and developing employment policies that enable both male and female workers to achieve a satisfactory balance between work and promoting responsible fatherhood.

10. The eradication of poverty is another common core theme. The conferences emphasize the need to better understand the causes of poverty and place poverty eradication as a central development priority. Various references were made to the fact that poverty is the main cause of social exclusion, and in almost all societies it threatens the ability of families to meet the needs of their members. Poverty permeates all aspects of family life and poor families bear a particularly large burden. The conferences recommend in this context, the adoption of policies that strengthen the family and contribute to its stability.

11. To summarize, the major significance of the global conferences to family issues and the subsequent attention to the family dimension in development efforts is the new emphasis placed on implementing and translating increased awareness into tangible measures. In this connection, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/142, the following recommendations are made in the spirit of the decisions of the conferences, as well as the objectives of the International Year of the Family:

(a) Governments are encouraged to consider developing family-impact assessments in their development activities and to formulate, implement and evaluate family-sensitive policies, programmes and strategies in accordance with the objectives implicit in the International Year of the Family. This would necessitate establishing or strengthening appropriate national mechanisms in respect of families;

(b) In view of the multisectoral nature of the family topic, and the need to promote the integrated treatment of social development issues, the elaboration of family-sensitive policies and programmes should receive appropriate attention in the framework of the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, in particular during the period 1997-2000;

(c) The activities of the focal point in the United Nations system to promote family issues at all levels, as successor to the secretariat of the International Year of the Family, should concentrate on issues related to the implementation of family-related provisions of the international declarations and plans of action of the global conferences of the 1990s.

III. COMMON CORE THEMES WITHIN THE FAMILY-SPECIFIC PROVISIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCES OF THE 1990s

12. The conferences covered a broad array of family-related issues. These may be summarized under five core themes: human rights; strengthening families; situation and needs of the child; advancement of women; and poverty eradication.

A. Human rights

13. The World Summit for Children attached great importance to the family and to the family's responsibility for caring for the child and for creating conditions conducive to the enjoyment of his or her rights. The Plan of Action describes an adequate family environment as the only appropriate context for the survival, protection and development of the child. The World Declaration and Plan of Action[1] adopted by the World Summit for Children urge all Governments to promote the earliest possible ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

14. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development[8] proclaimed the "right to development" as a means of equitably meeting developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations. It was noted, in Agenda 21,[2] that actions are needed to contribute to the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection. Such actions would focus on the areas of education, shelter, health care and the advancement of women. Specific reference is made to the relevant provisions of international instruments such as the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Also, Agenda 21 proposed that Governments consider adopting, strengthening and enforcing legislation prohibiting violence against women and implementing measures and programmes on the issues of responsible parenthood.

15. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action[3] reaffirmed basic principles governing international human rights activities, set out specific goals on a wide number of areas and identified various methods to achieve them. The Programme of Action adopted an integrated approach to the promotion and protection of all human rights. Its importance lies in its protection of individual members of families and in advocating the positive role families could play in the promotion and protection of human rights.

16. The Cairo Programme of Action,[4] in chapter 5 entitled "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure", focuses on the promotion of equality of opportunity for family members, especially the rights of children and women in the family. It calls on Governments to eliminate all forms of coercion and discrimination in policies and programmes. The reproductive rights of couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children is posed as central to government- and community-supported policies and programmes. Moreover, legislation and other measures are recommended to assist vulnerable families.

17. In the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action,[5] it is acknowledged that the family plays a key role in social development and, as such, should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members. Both call for creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development. Both call for fostering societies based on the promotion and protection of all human rights. The Programme of Action urges Governments to promote attitudes, structures, policies, laws and practices which eliminate inequality in the family.

18. The advancement of human rights within the family, equal rights and responsibilities of individual members of families, gender equality, the role of the father and protection and development of children are issues of central significance to the specific targets set forth in the Platform for Action[9] adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women. The human rights of women is a strategic objective of the Platform, which contains specific reference to reproductive rights of women, and freedom from discrimination, coercion and violence. The Platform suggests, inter alia, that in addressing the enjoyment of human rights, Governments should promote a policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes. The Beijing Declaration[10] reaffirms the international community's commitment to ensuring the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child.

19. The Istanbul Declaration and the Habitat Agenda[7] focus on adequate shelter for all as a basic human right. The Istanbul Declaration[11] reaffirms two basic commitments: a better standard of living and the full realization of the right to adequate housing, as provided for in international instruments. The Habitat Agenda[12] proclaims that all persons have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, including adequate food, clothing, housing, water and sanitation and the continuous improvement of living conditions. Furthermore, the Habitat Agenda states that the family is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and that the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of family members must be respected. Society should facilitate its integration, reunification, preservation, improvement and protection within adequate shelter and with access to basic services.

B. Strengthening families

20. The World Summit for Children discussed the family's changing capacity and competence, its strength and weaknesses, its nurturing role and its role as an agent of change. The World Declaration and the Plan of Action[1] recognize that strengthening families is achieved by strengthening the role and status of women, providing universal access to basic education and literacy, including completion of primary education or equivalent learning achievement, reducing the current disparities between boys and girls, reducing adult illiteracy, increasing female literacy, vocational training and preparation for employment and increased acquisition of knowledge, skills and values through all educational channels, including modern and traditional communication media, to improve the quality of life of children and families.

21. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development highlighted the close relationship between the environment and development, and between the patterns of behaviour and attitudes of different segments of society - including the family - and sustainable development. It highlighted the role of households in achieving the goals of sustainability. In the context of addressing demographic dynamics and sustainability, it made recommendations relating to family welfare, family credit schemes, the responsible planning of family size and responsible parenthood.[2]

22. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action[3] underline the role of the legal and legislative domain to strengthen communities and families. Particular

reference is made to: (a) strengthening both national and international mechanisms and programmes to this end; (b) urging the early ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its effective implementation; and (c) the importance of human rights education programmes.

23. The Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development[4] reaffirmed that the family is the nucleus of society, with the right to be protected by society and the State. It called for support to the most vulnerable families, and the formulation of family-sensitive policies in such areas as health, education, employment, housing and social security. It further stressed the importance of closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education, reducing maternal mortality rates and providing access to reproductive health.

24. The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action[5] recognized the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledged that it plays a key role in social development and as such should be strengthened. Within the commitments of Copenhagen, four policy areas to strengthen the family were identified: policies that ensure that all people have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, child rearing, widowhood, disability and old age; policies that enable people to combine their paid work with their family responsibilities; institutions that enhance social integration, recognizing the central role of the family; promoting changes in attitudes, structures, policies, laws and practices to eliminate all obstacles to equality in the family as well as promoting equal partnership between women and men in family and community life.

25. In the Beijing Declaration,[10] the World Conference voiced its conviction that equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women and a harmonious relationship between them are critical to family well-being. The Platform for Action[9] calls upon Governments to: (a) adopt policies to ensure the appropriate protection of labour laws and social security benefits; (b) promote career development based on work conditions that harmonize work and family responsibilities; (c) enact family-sensitive legislation; (d) design and provide educational programmes to raise awareness on gender equality; (e) integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects; (f) strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child by formulating national policies and programmes to help the family in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles; and (g) educate parents and care givers to treat girls and boys equally and to ensure shared responsibilities between them.

26. In the Habitat Agenda,[12] it is underlined that the family is the basic unit of society and as such should be strengthened and is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. Human settlements planning should take into account the constructive role of the family in the design, development and management of such settlements. Society should facilitate, as appropriate, all necessary conditions for the family's integration, reunification, preservation, improvement and protection within adequate shelter and with access to basic services and a sustainable livelihood. In this regard, the Habitat Agenda contains numerous suggestions for action, such as ensuring legal protection from discrimination in access to shelter and basic services; helping the family in

its supporting, educating and nurturing roles; and encouraging social and economic policies that are designed to meet the housing needs of families and their individual members.

C. Situation and needs of the child

27. The World Summit for Children discussed the family's changing capacity and competence, its strengths and weaknesses, its nurturing role and its role as an agent of change. The strategic importance of families in the survival, development and protection of children is underlined, notably with respect to the role of families in socialization, education, protection and the intergenerational transmission of culture and values. The Plan of Action[1] calls for giving children the chance to find their identity and realize their worth in a safe and supportive environment, through families and other care givers committed to their welfare.

28. Agenda 21,[2] noting that health and development are intimately interconnected and, urging Governments to meet the basic health needs of children, identified the family as having a primary role in protecting children. Governments are urged, inter alia, to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child; promote primary environmental care activities that address the basic needs of children and the community; and improve the environment for children at the household level.

29. The importance of the Vienna Declaration lies in its emphasis on the protection of individual members of families and the positive role families can play in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Programme of Action[3] notes that the family merits broader protection in order to provide an adequate environment for the full and harmonious development of children. Special importance is also given to protecting the rights of the girl child and of children in especially difficult circumstances.

30. The Cairo Programme of Action[4] contains a number of quantitative goals in the field of education, health, reproductive health and family planning, including the following: access to primary education; closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education; reducing infant mortality rates; reducing maternal mortality rates; access to reproductive health and meeting family planning needs. It stresses that the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family, as it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children.

31. The Copenhagen Programme of Action[13] contains numerous references to the child and the family. It calls for addressing the needs of children in especially difficult circumstances and protecting them by, inter alia, promoting family stability and providing mutual support; promoting social support including good quality child care and working conditions that allow both parents to reconcile parenthood with working life; and supporting and involving family organizations in community activities.

32. The Beijing Platform for Action[9] underlines the conditions of the girl child and calls for action to be taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination

against her. The education of parents, the protection by family members of the rights of the girl child and the need for support services to families are emphasized. The Platform for Action calls upon Governments to strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child by formulating appropriate family-friendly policies and programmes and providing an environment conducive to the strengthening of the family.

33. It is noted, in the Habitat Agenda,[12] that human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development and that all persons have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families. In this context, it proposes the provision of shelter and of basic services and facilities for the education and health care of children who are survivors of family violence. The Habitat Agenda reaffirms and is guided, as appropriate, by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

D. Advancement of women

34. The Plan of Action[1] adopted by the World Summit for Children focuses on strengthening the role and status of women by promoting responsible planning of family size, child spacing, breastfeeding and safe motherhood. Another area of concern is the lack of access of girls and women to basic education and literacy. The Plan of Action calls for increased acquisition of knowledge, skills and values, through all educational channels, to improve the quality of life of families.

35. Agenda 21[2] stresses the necessity of active participation and involvement of women in its implementation. It devotes a chapter to women and sustainable development and calls for a global strategy to eliminate political, legal, cultural, social and economic obstacles to women's full participation in sustainable development. In its advocacy of achieving equality in all aspects of society, Agenda 21 touches upon the need for responsible planning of family size and services, responsible parenthood, programmes to promote the reduction of the heavy workload at home, the sharing of household tasks by men and women on an equal basis, programmes to support and strengthen equal employment opportunities, and adequate support systems, including parental leave.

36. In the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,[3] Governments and institutions were urged to intensify their efforts for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women. The Programme of Action gave special importance to the integration of the status and human rights of women and to strengthening the protection of women's rights. It reaffirmed, on the basis of equality between men and women, a woman's right to accessible and adequate health care and the widest range of family planning services, as well as equal access to education at all levels. In this regard, families have a major role to play, particularly in creating a suitable environment and by promoting the respect, learning and practice of basic human rights.

37. The Cairo Programme of Action[4] highlights the necessity of gender equality in the family. It calls for equal participation of women and men in family responsibilities - family planning, child-rearing and housework. It underlines the imperative of empowering girls and women as a means of achieving sustainable

development. Closer attention to single-parent families, especially those headed by women, was encouraged. The Programme of Action recognized the need to integrate family planning activities into the broader context of reproductive health. It reaffirmed the basic human right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children.

38. In the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action,[5] it was noted that women carry a disproportionate share of the problems attendant to poverty, social disintegration and unemployment. It was also recognized that empowering women to strengthen their own capacities was a main objective of development and a principal resource to that end. In discussing the goals of full employment, eradicating poverty and ensuring social integration, the Copenhagen Declaration highlighted the role of women. This was particularly emphasized by commitment 5, which underlined the need to promote full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to enhance the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development. The Programme of Action stresses such measures as promoting changes in attitudes, structures, policies, laws and practices relating to equality in the family and in society, and promoting full and equal access by women to literacy education, training and health services.

39. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action[6] highlighted the fact that women play a critical role in the family, and set targets for women's full participation in economic and political decision-making, examining inequality between the sexes as a human rights issue, and intensifying international efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women. The Declaration and the Platform focused, inter alia, on poverty and women; unequal access to and inadequate health-care services and education opportunities; violence against women and lack of awareness of, and commitment to, internationally and nationally recognized women's rights.

40. Both the Habitat Agenda and the Istanbul Declaration[7] noted that the quality of life and the activities of all human beings within human settlements are closely interrelated with population change, demographic patterns, including growth, structure and distribution of population, and development variables such as education, health and nutrition, the levels of use of natural resources, the state of the environment and the pace and quality of economic and social development. In their advocacy of a cross-sectoral approach to policy development, particular attention was paid to the promotion of gender perspectives. Consequently, in recognition of the salient role women play in integrated human settlement planning and development, the Habitat Agenda underscored a variety of national-level actions such as removing barriers and eradicating discrimination in the provision of shelter, facilitating land and security of tenure for women, promoting mechanisms for the protection of widowed women, and ensuring the full participation of women in all decision-making processes, with particular regard to women in poverty.

E. Poverty eradication

41. A major focus of the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted by the World Summit for Children is child survival, protection and development. Children living in poverty were cited, particularly children forced into hazardous labour when family income and purchasing power cannot provide for their needs. The need for a global attack on poverty, which would have benefits for the welfare of children and their families, particularly in developing and least developed countries, was stressed. The Plan of Action provides specific actions directed at alleviating poverty in the areas of health, nutrition and education.

42. Agenda 21 describes poverty as a "complex multidimensional problem". It notes that the eradication of poverty and hunger, greater equity in income distribution and human resources development remain major challenges. It calls for an anti-poverty strategy which focuses on resources, production and people and covers demographic issues, enhanced health care and education, the rights of women, empowering women and communities, and provision of services and access to credit to poor families.

43. The Vienna Programme of Action recognized the mutually reinforcing interrelationship between democracy, development and respect for human rights and focused attention on the impact of extreme poverty and exclusion on the enjoyment of human rights and the need for action to eliminate them. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action recognized that widespread extreme poverty inhibits the full and effective enjoyment of human rights and urged its immediate alleviation as a high priority for the international community. The need to protect families, because of the central role that they play in achieving the full and harmonious development of their individual members, particularly children, was also highlighted.

44. The Cairo Programme of Action, in chapter 5 entitled "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure", identifies poverty as one cause of great strain on the family. It notes the existence of an increasing number of vulnerable families and calls for necessary support and protection of the family, including the formulation of family-sensitive policies in the fields of housing, work, health, social security and education.

45. The concept of poverty developed in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action is broad: it includes inadequate income, lack of access to education, health care and other amenities, and exclusion from participation in the life of the community. The Programme of Action emphasizes the need to focus efforts on the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, as well as on the provision of food security, education, employment and livelihood, and primary health-care services, including reproductive health care. Special priority is to be given to women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty. It recommends that overall economic and social policies and programmes should be examined with respect, inter alia, to their impact on family well-being.

46. The Beijing Platform for Action describes poverty as having various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to

ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; social discrimination and exclusion; and lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. In addition, the Platform for Action identifies the feminization of poverty as well as the poverty of low-wage workers and people who fall outside family support systems as significant problems in many countries. The Platform for Action underlines the need to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes directed towards the poorest and most disadvantaged groups of women and stressed that any strategy for eradicating poverty necessitates a gender perspective.

47. The Habitat Agenda draws attention to the relationship between equitable human settlements, poverty eradication and strengthening the family as the basic unit of society. The Istanbul Declaration and the Agenda reaffirm the commitment to the right to adequate housing, covering such issues as legal security of tenure, protection from discrimination and equal access to affordable and adequate housing for all.

IV. FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

A. National level

48. Since 1994, follow-up activities in many countries have been increasingly based on international standards, notably the International Covenants on Human Rights,[14] the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[15] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[16] Various countries have ensured that relevant national laws and administrative procedures reflect the reality of diverse forms of families.

49. Responsibility for family issues in many countries was combined with, or subsumed by, ministries responsible for children, women or social welfare questions. A number of Governments have established special mechanisms, such as ministries, departments or committees on the family, to promote effective national action. These include Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, Germany, Ghana, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zaire.

50. In Antigua and Barbuda, the Government is focusing on the unemployment situation in the country and its effects on families. Also, an education programme in financial management for family survival is under way.

51. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family established the Austrian Institute for Family Research to improve conditions of family life and to promote international cooperation on family research. The Federal Ministry also initiated the Austrian Visitors' Programme for Studying Exemplary Family Benefits and Family Services, which offers an opportunity for

representatives of developing countries to study family issues and programmes in Austria for one week.

52. The Government of Belarus has enacted legislation concerning State allowances to families with children and on the rights of the child. A new Family Code was reviewed by the Supreme Council and a National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women for the period 1996-2000 was adopted. A Department for Family and Gender Problems was established within the Social Welfare Ministry in 1995.

53. The Institute of Family Welfare within the Ministry of Health of Colombia celebrated the "month of the family" between the second Sunday of May and the second Sunday of June. The Institute organized, in October 1996, an International Seminar on Family and Development in the Twenty-first Century.

54. Follow-up activities undertaken by the Government of Cyprus included the following: a two-week seminar on domestic violence, in cooperation with non-governmental organizations; the observance of 15 May in 1995 and 1996 as the International Day of Families; publicity, studies and academic lectures on family issues; and the establishment of a Permanent Family Committee.

55. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Inter-ministerial Child Committee of Denmark have focused on ensuring an improved balance between work and family life. In 1996, the Government set aside 175 million Danish kroner to assist families with children experiencing a crisis situation.

56. The Government of Fiji recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. A draft National Action Plan on the Family is under review. The theme for 1995, which was the silver jubilee of Fiji's independence, was "The family, Fiji's hope". A Family and Population Activities Centre was established to assist non-governmental organizations in integrating family issues into their programmes.

57. In Finland, the Ministries of Labour and Social Affairs and Health, in collaboration with the European Social Foundation, have launched a research and development project on combining work and family life, to be completed by 1999. Legislation in 1996 secured the right to municipal day-care centres for all families with children under school-age.

58. In Ghana, an Intersectoral National Planning Committee, under the auspices of the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare, was set up to plan and implement family programmes.

59. The Government of Malaysia formulated a National Action Plan for Malaysian Families. Also, family issues are emphasized in the Seventh Malaysia Plan (1996-2000).

60. In Malta, the Ministry for Social Development created the Family Study and Research Commission. A survey was carried out to determine the actual state of Maltese families, with a view to setting future policies.

61. In New Zealand, the Department of Social Welfare initiated a Social Services Strategy for 1995-2005, emphasizing the family. In addition, the following initiatives are envisaged: an Institute of Family Studies to conduct research and provide information; a Policy Unit to monitor policy proposals and their impact on families; an Office of the Commissioner for the Family and Children; and the development of New Zealand Family Day into an annual event.

62. In the Philippines, a Presidential Executive Order in 1995 created the Steering Committee for the Proper Observance of Family Week (the fourth Sunday of September). Sixteen regional consultations were conducted to monitor the Plan of Action for the Filipino Family. Among the activities to celebrate Family Week is the yearly search for outstanding Filipino families who have demonstrated family values in their daily lives. The Steering Committee has decided to adopt an anti-pornography programme.

63. In Portugal, the High Commission on the Promotion of Equality and of the Family in 1996, organized meetings, disseminated family guidelines and provided financial and technical assistance to various family-related non-governmental organizations. In addition, research on the family, as well as legislation on strengthening the family, has been initiated. In 1995, Parliament approved a resolution underlining the vital role of the family and its right to protection. The Department for Family Affairs, created in 1982, is charged with its implementation.

64. The Government of Sao Tome and Principe is focusing on family law and has undertaken studies on families. It has created centres for children of working parents and initiated television and radio programmes on family education.

65. In Singapore, a family-values public education information package to help low-income families has been widely disseminated. Since 1995, family-life education programmes have been carried out. The Ministry of Community Development, which runs the Family Development Division and the Family Support Division, has initiated campaigns, a national Family Day, exhibitions and similar events.

66. In South Africa, a draft White Paper for Social Welfare, emphasizing the family, was initiated in 1996. A National Programme of Action for South African Families, Children and Youth is also being developed as part of the Five-Year Social Welfare Action Plan. Moreover, programmes to combat family violence and to celebrate National Family Day on 8 April are priorities.

67. In Thailand, the National Committee on the Family was established within the National Commission on Women's Affairs. During 1995-1996, the Committee formulated the Ten-Year Policies and Plans for the Development of the Family. It also financed local family support activities in the provinces, reviewed family-related laws and organized two seminars on family issues in 1995 and 1996.

68. During 1995-1996, the Government of Tunisia established a Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs, declared 11 December National Family Day, and created a National Council of Women.

69. In Venezuela, the Ministry of the Family has assisted non-governmental organizations and community-based groups to participate in social programmes concerned with families. It revised and adopted relevant legislation, and strengthened mechanisms of follow-up to and evaluation of family programmes and policies.

B. Regional level

70. The Economic Commission for Africa organized a one-day workshop to celebrate the International Day of Families, on 15 May 1995. The workshop heard lectures on the situation of displaced families in Ethiopia, gender relations in Ethiopian families and family health. In 1996, ECA organized a Seminar on the AIDS Pandemic and its Implications for Human Development and Utilization in Africa.

71. In 1996, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia created a database on policies and measures having impact on women and the family in the region and an annotated bibliography on Arab women and the family. In addition, a survey of female-headed households in the region is planned to investigate the concept of the feminization of poverty for Arab women.

72. During 1995-1996, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has undertaken projects on the Enhancement of social security for the poor, and on lifelong preparation for old age. The Social Development Newsletter, published twice yearly, regularly disseminates information on family-related subjects. ESCAP has initiated a project entitled 'Strengthening the role of the family in providing social protection to its vulnerable members, including older persons' to assist Governments in the region to elaborate family-sensitive policies and programmes.

73. The Economic Commission for Europe coordinates a region-wide comparative research project on fertility and family surveys to generate relevant information on the composition and origin of current families, distribution of various household tasks, the break-up of families, and selected family values and attitudes. A second round of fertility and family surveys is planned for the year 2000.

C. International level

1. United Nations organizations and agencies

74. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) has prepared plans of action for inclusion in the revised System-wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control, in which the family is a resource in the process of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation. The family is also reflected in the plans on gender and drug abuse; children and youth in especially difficult circumstances; drug abuse in the workplace; and drug abuse prevention in the school environment. Technical cooperation activities target young people who are at high risk of drug abuse, and focus on the family has been integrated in this process. UNDCP has undertaken activities that stress women as drug

abusers, as family members of drug abusers and as agents of prevention and change.

75. During 1995-1996, numerous projects and activities of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations were aimed at improving family well-being. Particular focus was on the preparation of the World Food Summit, held in Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996, which addressed food security and the right of all people to the access of nutritionally adequate and safe food.

76. Follow-up activities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization consisted of establishing pilot projects with both the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Albania, celebrating the International Day of Families with the Paris Non-governmental Committee on the Family, a conference on family policy, and the publication of an article entitled "Supporting family responsibility for the rights of the child: an educational viewpoint".

77. The International Labour Organization emphasized promoting measures that would enable workers to perform their jobs and care for their families. A booklet entitled "Equal opportunities and equal treatment for workers with family responsibilities" featured the principles and requirements of the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156).

2. Other intergovernmental organizations

78. In 1995, the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) initiated an ongoing study project on the family entitled "A study on the feasibility of an ASEAN mechanism on child and family development".

79. The European Commission and the Council of Europe, in collaboration with the International Catholic Child Bureau, initiated a three-year project, "European Consortium", on education in communication between adults and children.

3. Non-governmental organizations

80. The non-governmental sector has continued its partnership role. International, regional and national non-governmental organizations continued their activities in the promotion of the principles and objectives of the Year, organizing meetings or seminars on family issues, and conducting training, research and studies on family issues.

81. The International Union of Family Organizations has organized various meetings related to Habitat II and the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996). In December 1996, an International Conference on Family Policies was organized in Quebec, Canada.

82. The Vienna Non-governmental Organization Committee on the Family initiated a Plan of Action for 1995-1997 and a draft Framework for Future Action for 1996-1997, and published the newsletter Families International. The Committee

organized a seminar on integrating the family in social progress and development on 11 and 12 November 1996 at Vienna.

83. The Confederation of Family Organizations in the European Community (COFACE) organized its Fourth European Family Conference, with the theme "Social policy - burden or support for the European economy" at Dublin on 21 and 22 November 1996. The Conferences are held every three years. Another current priority of COFACE is to have family policy integrated into the European Union Treaty.

84. The New York Non-governmental Organization Committee on the Family has expended efforts to ensure that the family - and particularly its essential role - is reflected in the outcomes of the global conferences of the 1990s. Its programme for 1996-1997 focuses on advocacy and promotional activities.

85. In addition, the following international and regional non-governmental organizations have informed the Secretariat of their active participation and involvement in follow-up activities: Baha'i International Community, Caritas International, Foundation for the Rights of the Family - International Secretariat (PRODEFA), International Association of Lions Clubs - Lions Club International, International Catholic Child Bureau, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation for Parent Education, International Federation of Social Workers, International Movement ATD Fourth World, International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling, Rotary International, Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture, SOS - Kinderdorf International, Centre for Family Studies, Family Service America, Institute Henry-Dunant, National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, Pro Familia, Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development.

4. Research and academic institutions

86. During 1995-1996, the Australian Institute of Family Studies revised and expanded its International Directory of International Year of the Family Research Activities and has made it available on the Internet. The Institute plans to continue to develop its World Wide Web site as a focus for family research and policy information.

87. The Vanier Institute of the Family undertook projects and partnership development activities such as a statistical overview of family data, a Canadian family data service, the expansion of its Partnership Development Programme and dissemination of its publication Transition.

88. In 1995-1996, the Tata Institute of Social Sciences published a book entitled Indian Bibliographies on the Family, funded by the Indian Ministry of Welfare. It also published special issues on the family in The Indian Journal of Social Work as well as in a government report entitled India's Commitment to Family Well-Being: A Report to the People.

89. The Centre for Family Friendly Cities of the University of Akron, Ohio, United States of America, created an interactive communications network on the

World Wide Web designed to store, search and retrieve information on, inter alia, family relationships, sexuality and reproduction, special problems and risk factors, family counselling and education, cultural social and urban issues, basic needs, leisure and entertainment, consumption and sustainable development and work.

90. The International Family Policy Forum, based in Montreal, was founded in 1995 as a consortium that involves Governments, non-governmental organizations and research and academic institutions. It aims to facilitate international cooperation in the area of family concerns and encourages the participation of partners in projects and activities identified by its Board of Directors.

V. SECRETARIAT ACTIVITIES RELATING TO THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY

91. Activities relating to the follow-up to the International Year of the Family have been integrated into the work programme of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, which is guided by the long-term objectives implicit in the decisions taken regarding families in the context of the Year and within the framework of the family-related provisions of the recent global conferences.

92. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/142, the Voluntary Fund for the International Year of the Family was renamed the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities. Assistance continues to be provided to activities and projects of direct benefit to families, particularly in developing and least developed countries. The Secretariat continued the substantive management of the Fund by reviewing requests from Governments and non-governmental organizations for funding, preparing funding recommendations and monitoring and evaluating projects. The resources of the Fund at the end of 1996 were estimated to be about US$ 360,000.

93. The Division for Social Policy and Development initiated actions for the worldwide observance of the International Day of Families (15 May) by preparing background information on the family for use by Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, including the regional commissions and United Nations information centres, and non-governmental organizations. A message by the Secretary-General was prepared for wide distribution in 1996 and again in 1997. The 1996 International Day of Families was observed in many countries, by Governments,[17] United Nations agencies and bodies,[18] non-governmental organizations[19] and numerous educational institutions. Many countries have been planning events for 1997.

94. In its efforts to promote and strengthen international cooperation on family issues, the Secretariat signed a memorandum of understanding, with the Bratislava International Centre for Family Studies and substantively assisted the Austrian Federal Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family Affairs in selecting candidates for the Visitors' Programme for Studying Exemplary Family Benefits and Family Services in Austria and reviewing its programme. An inventory on best practices of family policies is in preparation to facilitate

an exchange of information and experience. In this connection, the Secretariat is working closely with the Government of Austria.

95. Supportive relationships with the non-governmental organization Committees on the Family in Vienna, New York and Paris have been reinforced. The Division participated in various family-related meetings organized by concerned non-governmental organizations and academic institutions.

96. In collaboration with the International Federation for Parent Education, the International Federation for Training and Development and the Centre for Family Studies at the University of Akron, the Division is promoting action-oriented research and case studies on salient family issues.

97. The Division, as the focal point within the United Nations system on matters relating to families, continued its efforts to consult and cooperate with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other International Year of the Family partners on an effective follow-up to the Year. Central to these collaborative efforts was the advocacy of the family as a prime issue of social policy. The Division has utilized meetings, conferences and general correspondence to promote and publicize family-related topics. Circular letters focused on encouraging national focal points, United Nations bodies and the non-governmental organization sector to generate substantive and information activities.

98. Current and future work relating to family issues is guided by the recommendations of the global conferences of the 1990s and specific intergovernmental mandates.

99. The significance of the global conferences and their core themes of relevance to family issues is that they affirm the objectives set for the International Year of the Family and confirm the importance of the family as the basic social unit and the value of a family-sensitive perspective in social and development policy.

100. In addition to intergovernmental mandates provided by the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, the conclusions of the regional meetings held in 1993, the International Conference on Families, held in Montreal in 1994, and the Interregional Meeting of Focal Points in 1995 are also relevant insofar as they reflect the thinking regarding institution-building and the strengthening of international cooperation on family issues.

101. With the above-mentioned in mind, the Division will continue to promote international cooperation within the context of the follow-up to the International Year of the Family. More specifically, it will:

(a) Assist in integrating family concerns within the multi-year work programme for 1997-2000 of the Commission for Social Development;

(b) Provide policy guidance on ways to strengthen family-centred components of policies and programmes as part of an integrated, comprehensive approach to development;

(c) Facilitate the dissemination and exchange of ideas and experiences on family issues, reinforce networking with concerned partners and civil society, and in this context, organize a series of subregional expert group meetings;

(d) Develop an inventory of best practices of family policies;

(e) Prepare a global family country-profile report in 1999;

(f) Mobilize resources, inter alia, through the Trust Fund on Family Activities to support the above initiatives.

Notes

[1] A/45/625, annex.

[2] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 (A/CONF.151/26/Rev.1 (vol. I and vol. I/Corr.1, vol. II, vol. III and vol. III/Corr.1)) (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: Resolutions Adopted by the Conference, resolution 1, annex II.

[3] A/CONF.157/24 (Part I).

[4] Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September, 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[5] A/CONF.166/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[6] A/CONF.177/20, chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[7] A/CONF.165/14, chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II.

[8] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ..., resolution 1, annex I.

[9] A/CONF.177/20, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[10] Ibid., annex I.

[11] A/CONF.165/14, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[12] Ibid., annex II.

[13] A/CONF.166/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[14] General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[15] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[16] General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.

[17] Albania, Bahrain, Belarus, Colombia, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Latvia, Malaysia, Philippines, Portugal, Russian Federation, South Africa, Singapore, Slovakia and Tunisia.

[18] Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Economic Commission for Africa, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, and United Nations information centres.

[19] Union of Latvian Large Families Association, Congolese Association for Families' Welfare, Indian Institute for Peace, Disarmament and Environmental Protection, NGO Forum on Families, India, Centre of Documentation and Research at the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Brazil, UNESCO NGO Standing Committee on the Family, University of Padua, Hong Kong Council of Social Services, Argentinean Council for Development and Social Action.